

Propaganda Student Handout

Types of Propaganda

There are many techniques commonly used in the dissemination of propaganda. Use this handout to help you identify different types of propaganda throughout Cold War.

- (1) **BANDWAGON**: The basic idea behind the bandwagon approach is just that, "getting on the bandwagon." The propagandist puts forth the idea that everyone is doing this, or everyone supports this person/cause, and so should you. The bandwagon approach appeals to the conformist in all of us: No one wants to be left out of what is perceived to be a popular trend.

EXAMPLE: Everyone in Lemmingtown is behind Jim Duffie for Mayor. Shouldn't you be part of this winning team?

- (2) **TESTIMONIAL**: This is the celebrity endorsement of a philosophy, movement or candidate. In advertising, for example, athletes are often paid millions of dollars to promote sports shoes, equipment and fast food. In political circles, movie stars, television stars, rock stars and athletes lend a great deal of credibility and power to a political cause or candidate. Just a photograph of a movie star at political rally can generate more interest in that issue/candidate or cause thousands, sometimes millions, of people to become supporters.

EXAMPLE: "Sam Slugger", a baseball Hall of Famer who led the pros in hitting for years, appears in a television ad supporting Mike Politico for U.S. Senate. Since Sam is well known and respected in his home state and nationally, he will likely gain Mr. Politico many votes just by his appearance with the candidate.

- (3) **PLAIN FOLKS**: Here the candidate or cause is identified with common people from everyday walks of life. The idea is to make the candidate/cause come off as grassroots & all-American.

EXAMPLE: New England Democrat Senator John Kerry takes a break from campaigning in this crucial state to goose hunt, and take the seemingly mandatory photo-op.

- (4) **TRANSFER**: Transfer employs the use of symbols, quotes or the images of famous people to convey a message not necessarily associated with them. In the use of transfer, the candidate/speaker attempts to persuade us through the indirect use of something we respect, such as a patriotic or religious image, to promote his/her ideas. Religious and patriotic images may be the most commonly used in this propaganda technique but they are not alone. Sometimes even science becomes the means to transfer the message.

EXAMPLE: The environmentalist group PEOPLE PROMOTING PLANTS, in its attempt to prevent a highway from destroying the natural habitat of thousands of plant species, produces a television ad with a "scientist" in a white lab coat explaining the dramatic consequences of altering the food chain by destroying this habitat.

- (5) **FEAR**: This technique is very popular among political parties and PACs (Political Action Committees) in the U.S. The idea is to present a dreaded circumstance and usually follow it up with the kind of behavior needed to avoid that horrible event.

EXAMPLE: The Citizens for Retired Rights present a magazine ad showing an elderly couple living in poverty because their social security benefits have been drastically cut by the Republicans in Congress. The solution? The CRR urges you to vote for Democrats.

- (6) **LOGICAL FALLACIES**: Applying logic, one can usually draw a conclusion from one or more

established premises. In the type of propaganda known as the logical fallacy, however, the premises may be accurate but the conclusion is not.

EXAMPLE:

- *Premise 1:* Republican President George W. Bush identified Iraq as a terrorist state, bent on using weapons of mass destruction.
- *Premise 2:* 23 Senators voted against the invasion, 21 of them Democrats.
- *Conclusion:* Democrats will be ineffective, compared to Republicans, in dealing with terrorism.

We can see in this example that the Conclusion is created by a twisting of logic, and is therefore a fallacy.

http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=107&session=2&vote=00237

(7) GLITTERING GENERALITIES: This approach is closely related to what is happening in TRANSFER (see above). Here, a generally accepted virtue is usually employed to stir up favorable emotions. The problem is that these words mean different things to different people and are often manipulated for the propagandists' use. The important thing to remember is that in this technique the propagandist uses these words in a positive sense. They often include words like: democracy, family values (when used positively), rights, civilization, even the word "American."

EXAMPLE: An ad by a cigarette manufacturer proclaims to smokers: Don't let them take your rights away! ("Rights" is a powerful word, something that stirs the emotions of many, but few on either side would agree on exactly what the 'rights' of smokers are.)

(8) NAME-CALLING: This is the opposite of the GLITTERING GENERALITIES approach. Name-calling ties a person or cause to a largely perceived negative image.

EXAMPLE: In a campaign speech to a logging company, the Congressman referred to his environmentally conscious opponent as a "tree hugger."

(9) CHEWBACCA DEFENSE/REASONING: This propaganda technique has varied examples in the modern world. This technique has been defined as speaking something so completely nonsensical and irrelevant to the topic on hand that hopefully nobody listens further. It was recently used by Dinesh D'Souza in his criticism for the Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. (*This could also be referred to as the Rumsfeld Method, for his numerous rambling and confusing press conferences while serving as Secretary of Defense, read below—Mr. Coonrod*)

EXAMPLE: In a Defense Department Briefing on February 12, 2003, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made his now famous unknown unknowns statement:

"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know."

...or *"I believe what I said yesterday. I don't know what I said, but I know what I think... and I assume it's what I said."* Donald Rumsfeld, February 13, 2003

(10) SYMPATHY/APOLOGIST REASONING: This technique can be seen in the knee-jerk reactions of govt done in order to right a perceived previous wrong. Reasoning may be totally unrelated to topic, but is designed to stir up enough emotions/guilt to persuade others to blindly vote for or support an idea.

In 2009, the Democrats in the U.S. Congress was debating the health care overhaul bill in spite of much public opposition. In trying to keep the bill moving, the phrase "let's win one for Teddy" was heard. Senator Ted Kennedy was a long time advocate for universal health care and passed away shortly before the Congress voted to overhaul the health care system.